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ABSTRACT

The language laboratory could make a larger impact than it does on undergraduate language study. The growth of attractive new technology makes even more important the careful evaluation and exploitation of existing technology. A major obstacle in doing this is the lack of careful and rigorous research about the effectiveness of the language laboratory in achieving specific objectives in specific courses in which the laboratory has been given a specific role. Another obstacle has been the limiting of laboratory use to lower-level courses. It is time for the language laboratory to be viewed less as a teaching aid and more as a learning aid. This suggests that its principal value might be in independent study, which would affect the teacher's role and materials and course design. An experiment at the University of Bradford (England) illustrates the successful integration of language laboratory use into an undergraduate language course. (MSE)

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HAS THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY A PLACE IN THE UNDERGRADUATE LANGUAGE COURSE?

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HAS THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY A PLACE IN THE UNDERGRADUATE LANGUAGE COURSE?

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A survey carried out in 1979 by the C.N.A.A. into the resources available in Higher Education for the teaching and learning of foreign languages concluded that "although considerable value was attached to language laboratories, there were, paradoxically, many reservations about their effectiveness, much evidence of under-use, and a tendency to revert to more conventional teaching as the language course progressed". The identification of such a paradox was important. In spite of its alleged ineffectiveness, the language laboratory is still felt by many to possess a potential which remains, as yet, unexploited. For some reason this particular technology has never managed to establish itself as more than a peripheral feature of advanced level teaching in universities and polytechnics, even though most of the latter are equipped, or have access to, laboratory facilities, often of the most sophisticated kinds.

One explanation may lie in the fact that most of the published language courses containing a laboratory element have been designed for work at sub-degree level - a situation which will hopefully change during the next few years following the publication of the First Year Course in French by the Scottish Universities, although the laboratory element in that course appears as an adjunct rather than as a core element. Another explanation may be that advanced language courses are, by their nature, individual concepts reflecting the aims and convictions of the institutions which devise them. There has also been, especially during the sixties and seventies, the struggle of new approaches to find their place alongside traditional, or conventional, techniques, and the need to re-formulate principles of methodology in the fields of language acquisition and linguistic theory. A pilot attempt to rationalise the place of the language laboratory in courses at degree level is long overdue, although it is probable that precise descriptions may well be valid only in respect of the particular courses to which they relate. It is the purpose of this paper to suggest some possible lines along which this might be done; it is not the intention simply to list the various kinds of activity which, as is known from experience, can provide valuable contributions to the strengthening of certain linguistic skills, and which are often introduced at some point into teaching programmes. The assumption is that the language laboratory can - and ought - to offer opportunities for teaching and learning which, for the spoken language at least, cannot be provided elsewhere with the same economy of time and effort.

An attempt at rationalisation is prompted also by the current popularity of video and computer-assisted learning, which themselves offer new perspectives for language teaching, with a correspondingly significant

demand on time, talents and money. This trend alone emphasises the need to consider systematically, and with greater care than in the past, the functions of existing technology in language centres, about which there is insufficient information at the present time. It is reasonable to suggest that decisions to install language teaching plant for the next decade should be based not upon the wish to increase prestige - as was sometimes the case in the past - but upon sound research evidence of usefulness, and upon the clearly perceived needs of language teaching and learning methodologies agreed by staff in particular departments or institutions. This supposes that coherent philosophies of language teaching and learning will have been elaborated to suit particular circumstances. If this were the case, it would present a marked contrast with the sixties when, in spite of tremendous enthusiasm and activity in Europe and in America, interest in the language laboratory waned as it became increasingly evident that four-phase drills could not provide the necessary variety or replicate 'real' language situations: that the hardware was, in fact, much less important that the software, which demanded for its compilation far more time than could be made available in busy departments. Also, the sustained effort required when concentrating on speaking performance was exhausting - for the teacher as well as for the student.

A major stumbling-block to progress has also been that the investigations which have been carried out into the effectiveness of the laboratory have been focussed largely at sub-degree levels, with mixed results. In America research involving school and college populations suggested that using the language laboratory as part of a teaching programme had been beneficial in respect of improving listening comprehension, 'set' dialogue participation and structure drills, but that the approaches used in the laboratory classes had not, on balance, been significantly more effective than 'normal' classroom techniques - a conclusion endorsed in this country by the York experiment. It is not, therefore, surprising that the history of the language laboratory has been marked by what Ornstein described in 1971 as 'a long chronicle of innovation followed by high optimism, followed in turn by disappointment'. In the universities large-scale experiment was missing. Important results might have emerged from investigations based on the requirements of particular language courses, in which the laboratory had been allocated a specific role, standing in the same relationship within the methodology as any of the other teaching aids available, including blackboard and chalk. The problem is that the existence of such explicitly formulated methodologies for language teaching in the universities is doubtful. However, the groundwork must be done if the logical place of the laboratory - or its rejection - is to be determined. The efforts and experiments of the sixties became obsessed with the potential of the machines to improve those linguistic skills which demonstrated the more obvious advantages of using a tape recorder, with the result that experiments to investigate the wider potential of the laboratory did not take place. The result was that the limited skills application became isolated from all other aspects of language learning. The approach stemmed directly from the popularity of structure drills and contributed significantly to the decline which eventually set in, and from which the reputation of the language laboratory has never recovered. The failure to transfer the same types of exercise to more advanced stages of language learning also

reinforced a feeling that the laboratory was only really useful during the early stages.

The time is ripe for university language departments to take a close look at their teaching. The call for greater emphasis to be placed on communicating skills applies as much to degree work as to other language courses. What is needed is a fundamental reappraisal of the aims of the courses themselves, this would then be followed by the construction of firm metholologies for each, in which the technological aids would have a clear contribution to make. In spite of contributions stemming from work in linguistics, university language departments have been rather slower to respond to progress than they might have done; it is, indeed, strange that considerable investment should have been made in installing expensive plant - often on a large scale - without major research activity on the part of the practitioners. Here again history presents a disappointing picture. As early as the sixties warnings were sounded that only rigorous research would provide the key to the proper development of the new instruments. Carroll (1963) called for projects which would encompass whole language courses, along the lines indicated above, each designed for specific purposes, rather than experimentation centred on isolated skills. A research team at the University of Nancy (1968) endorsed the plea - 'the existence of the language laboratory compels us to reconsider all our preconceived ideas, and to evolve methods adapted to this new technical instrument. The role of the laboratory as an educational instrument will only develop with the progress of research'. The implication is clear: only in the context of a complete re-thinking of course structure can the correct place of the language laboratory be found in a valid, coherent methodology.

That research does not appear to have been directed along such global lines was probably due to the over-emphasis on producing, as quickly as possible, exercises along Skinnerian lines to reinforce particular skills. The most serious consequence of this kind of approach was not only that people gradually lost interest; it was the failure, during the sixties and seventies, to formulate a coherent theory of language laboratory use, or to construct a general methodological model. Nothing has crystallised in spite of a great deal of work in many isolated corners of the university and polytechnic world. Efforts must now be concentrated on bringing the various pieces of the puzzle together; a willingness to co-operate across institutions would pay dividends.

Perhaps the most cogent reason for the absence of a coherent pattern of use lies in the distinction which must be drawn, methodologically, between 'initial' and 'advanced' work. The language laboratory has often been assigned a prominent place in the early stages of learning, where drill and structure activities of the 'traditional' type tend to predominate. The real difficulties of incorporating the language laboratory into the methodology start with post A-level courses, and continue at all stages of degree work, when the development of the student's linguistic competence and performance assumes a rather different approach. Skinnerian 'imitation' must be transformed as quickly as possible into Chomskyan creativity. It is here that a clear understanding must be reached, in the design of the course as a whole, about

what constitutes language teaching at this level, and about what constitutes language learning. In terms of the methodology, language teaching is to be defined initially as comprising those activities directed by and carried out in the presence of a tutor; language learning as comprising those activities which are capable of being carried out by the student himself. In order to create a distinction of this kind, a clear statement of what is meant by 'teaching the language' and 'learning the language' is essential. The distinction is paramount, not only because the question of the 'programmability' of language at more advanced stages of language learning is involved, but also the processes by which the target language is learned, and its interaction with the mother tongue. Whatever theories about these aspects are adopted, it is important that informed decisions are made at the theoretical level about the possible ways in which the advanced student develops his knowledge of and performance in the target language, and that the results of such decisions should form the basis of the methodology to be developed. This constitutes one major way in which research in Applied Linguistics, especially in the processes involved in encoding and decoding language, should be contributing to the design and realisation of suitable teaching and learning materials for advanced courses conceived as coherent wholes.

The need to provide a clear view of language upon which courses and methods can be based is accompanied by the fact that in advanced work it becomes progressively more difficult to consider separately aspects which are purely linguistic from those which are not. For example, skill-training exercises often associated with laboratory work involve extra-linguistic factors, in the sense that the desired performance, although requiring use of the language, depends upon capacities which reflect rather the intellectual level of the student. Thus, listening comprehension exercises which call for the production of a summary of what has been heard, or which demand the presentation of selected opinions or arguments, are not, technically, strengthening exclusively linguistic skills; nor do they primarily teach the latter, although because they involve linguistic performance, they constitute worthwhile activities. Recognition of this could open up new possibilities for investigating language laboratory use. In practice, it is possible to confuse the issue: for example, by assigning greater prominence to the linguistic aspects of the exercise, which does not help the student who is good at language but weak in the analytical skills involved. Predictably such a student might perform less well linguistically as a result. The language laboratory might , in the scheme of things, offer opportunities for activities in which the spin-off is linguistic, although the aim is centred elsewhere. This avenue is ripe for investigation.

Critics of the language laboratory have usually concentrated their attacks on the artificiality of the range of exercise-types which have tended to dominate, and which often reflect conflicting views about the nature and function of language. The growing insistence on 'communicative language' has not helped. Within the global view of language and language learning adopted as appropriate for their purposes by the teachers concerned with a particular course, there must be a clear idea about the degree to which the

language can be 'programmed' at this level; the various exercise-types should embody the ideas about language underpinning the course as a whole. On the other hand, like Jakobovits, we would reject the view that exercises, of whatever type, should be avoided simply on the grounds that, in the light of some theory or other, they are inadmissible, if such exercises can be seen to work. However, the question of the 'programmability' of the foreign language beyond the early stages must be resolved, if progress is to be made. It is here that investigations could most usefully take place. Spolsky pointed the way: 'the serious problem of programmed foreign language instruction occurs at the two points at which both taxonomics, linguistics and Skinnerian psychology have least to offer: the point at which one goes from form to meaning, and the point at which one wishes to deal with novel combinations of units'. Thus we are confronted by the fundamental question of what we mean by 'teaching the language' in our courses, and by the need to come to grips with the distinction which must be drawn, as explicitly as possible, between 'basic structures' - seen to be the nuts and bolts of the target language, which increase in volume and complexity as the student progresses - and what might conveniently be called 'creative production'. Once the distinction is drawn, experiment might indicate the methods of setting up suitable conditions for encouraging the transition from one to the other. We must discover what must be 'supplied' in the learning materials and in the teaching techniques in order that 'internalising' of the Chomskyan type can occur firmly and progressively. Along with this experiments could be conducted to determine the extent to which the technical instruments, including the language laboratory, can provide the sorts of stimulus and environment necessary to facilitate the subsequent progress towards individual 'creative' expression. The first important steps would thus have been taken towards integrating the machines into a clear methodology. Creating new situations in which newly-acquired structures/language can arise spontaneously is difficult. What is suggested is that work inside and outside the laboratory should be organised systematically, in accordance with a precise scheme, the laboratory aspect forming an essential part of the whole, rather than a bit 'added on'. This implies a clear understanding of what, in such circumstances, the laboratory can contribute to the learning process. It also requires the greatest amount of flexibility in the teaching spaces provided, since, ideally, the machines would be available at the precise moments they were required during a class.

One avenue of approach to the question of 'programmability' was provided by Wilga Rivers in the distinction she drew between 'open' and 'closed' levels of language. The latter include 'language elements which occur in fixed relationships in clearly defined closed systems' (i.e. they will vary between very narrow limits), the former 'a level of expression of personal meaning, at which possible variations are infinite'. The first level would, for the present argument, include parctice drills of various kinds aimed at encouraging the development of good linguistic habits; the second would probably take place outside the language laboratory. Another way would be to build on the work done in the sixties by Margaret Hilton at Birmingham and Denis Ager at Salford, which described and examined open-ended laboratory approaches, in which the subsequent exploitation of the language learned there took place in

a seminar room. To these might be added the work carried out in Bradford during the early seventies by a team investigating the possibility of constructing a first year course in French on communicative lines.

The main need, therefore, is to identify, then to describe as precisely as possible the kinds of contribution the language laboratory could make to the teaching/learning process. This, in turn, depends as much upon general theories of learning as upon theories of language and language acquisition. The place of cognitive theories, especially in relation to adult-learning processes and strategies, is important; the processes involved in learning the foreign language must be considered within the wider context of the other kinds of learning which occur in degree work. It is as well, also, to remember that students have certain expectations about the nature of the work involved in university study, especially in respect of the intellectual content of the challenges presented to them. This is sometimes expressed in the distinction which they make between what they call the 'linguistic' side of their course and the 'non-linguistic' one, seen as corresponding to their literary, political, economic, social, or historical studies. It is to the latter that they often ascribe, wrongly, the greater part of the intellectual contribution they must make. The ways in which they absorb, handle and process information and ideas, in English and in the foreign language, should, therefore, be studied. Language courses, in so far as they are often conceived of separately from the other elements of study, must establish as a high priority the narrowing of the gap between the intellectual aspirations of the student and his linguistic competence. It is also vital that decisions are taken about the desirable ratio to be established between the teaching and the learning aspects of the process. The newer language courses have, understandably, laid greater emphasis on the need for tutor/student contact in their shift towards developing greater proficiency in performance in the spoken language; in the enthusiasm to set up new patterns of working, sight was perhaps lost of the fact that undergraduates are capable of - and should be expected to - work independently. In reviewing their aims and methods linguists must consider carefully the need to transfer to the student, albeit under careful guidance, greater personal responsibility for the development of his linguistic competence and performance. The role of the language laboratory will, again, come under scrutiny, as a main source of self-help at particular stages in the course. This is not to say that class contact hours should be drastically reduced; it suggests, rather, that consideration should be given to devising courses in which the available technology can be harnessed more effectively and more economically than at present. Such a proposal involves a great deal of work, in devising and testing suitable materials for guiding the student.

Accepting the proposal would, as an immediate consequence, have the effect of moving away from mainly teacher-based activities to learner-based ones. The shift of emphasis would simultaneously compel a reappraisal of the role of the tutor in the language course and allow the language laboratory to be viewed from an entirely different angle: its function as a teaching aid would have to be differentiated from its function as a learning aid. The result might well be the decision that the principal benefits it offers at degree level

lie in its exploitation as a self-study facility. The links between these complementary teaching and learning functions should always be apparent to tutor and student, so that the machines are seen in a clear perspective as a means to an end. The shift away from predominently teacher-based to learner-based situations reflects a trend which has been apparent among linguists for some time; it also changes dramatically the angle from which the laboratory has been traditionally viewed. For example, in making materials aimed at improving performance in reporting orally texts which are heard, it is useful to distinguish between

(a) materials designed to teach or to strengthen the necessary analytical/synthesising skills,

(b) materials designed to improve linguistic performance in the register involved, and

(c) practice texts for reinforcing learning, and allowing student and tutor to monitor performance and assess progress.

The distinctions rest firmly on discussions about the complementary aspects of the teaching and learning processes which operate in each instance. They also call for the study of the place and functions of the machines.

In more general terms this underlines the need to take a fresh look at the language laboratory from both angles which may, or may not, be complementary, depending on the circumstances:

(a) as a sophisticated teaching aid at the service of a tutor, and

(b) as a private-study resource, to which the student has free access for individual work assignments, listening practice, remedial and reference work, or to enjoy listening to a wide range of recorded materials.

One way of establishing criteria for examining the laboratory in this way would be to consider what, in a methodology of language teaching, working in the booths should do, as distinct from what it can do, at every stage of the course. The central point of this would be a fundamental scrutiny of the rôle of the tutor in the learning process, since a description of those activities which are more conveniently carried out in the laboratory, automatically compels the discovery of those for which the presence of a tutor is necessary. An attempt to describe fully the latter sorts of activity is to be welcomed. The laboratory would then be closer to finding its positive place in the methodology as a whole. These would provide a clear indication of what could be expected from its use, and a better understanding of why it can or should be used for some purposes and not for others. Wide cooperation between institutions would, in addition, provide valuable information about laboratory use within course structures, which might, eventually, contribute to the formulation of the general theory of use which is at present lacking. However, in all circumstances, the use of the language laboratory should, at every point, be tightly integrated into the course design. Attention must

move away from the isolated exercises of the past towards systems of language learning/teaching which stand as wholes, and in which different institutions realise their own descriptions of the rôles the technology can play in terms of their own aims and convictions. The distinction between the learning as opposed to the teaching function is, therefore, crucial, because it is clear that, in advanced work (apart from specialised activities such as interpreting) the first one may very well turn out to be more useful than the second. This has implications not only for the kinds of material which need to be supplied, but also in the provision of suitable work facilities. This concept has, hopefully, been realised in the new Modern Languages Centre at Bradford.

Assessing the laboratory as a teaching aid centres on the rôle of the tutor during a class. The nature and methods of monitoring student activity have always been difficult to describe satisfactorily. It would seem useful to attempt to classify the activities for which the presence of a tutor is

(a) essential
(b) desirable
(c) unnecessary.

In addition to determining those occasions upon which it is felt that the tutor must be present, the exercise would, more significantly, focus attention on his rôle during the class. Such enquiries would help to clarify the ways in which 'monitoring' can help student and tutor. Perhaps this is the key to useful progress.

One consequence of an analysis of this kind would be the need to take a close look at the kinds of laboratory resource required in order to realise the demands of the selected methodology. The clear identification of the strengths and limitations of the machines as learning and teaching aids would lead, ultimately, to the need, in an ideal situation, to make a distinction between fully-equipped language teaching rooms, with audio-comparative facilities, where the layout, as here at Bradford, would offer the greatest possible flexibility for varied teaching styles, and language resources rooms equipped with individual facilities for listening and working. Such provision would highlight the distinction drawn earlier between teaching and learning functions. The creation of resources rooms is probably most important for the future development of the rôles assigned to the technology. A comfortable, attractive audio library should constitute one of the main attributes of a Modern Languages Department, offering, in respect of the spoken language, the same kind of source as the library provides for the printed word. To spend time listening should be no less 'natural', no less 'useful', no less 'expected' than reading a book. It should certainly be no less enjoyable. It is nurturing the attitude which matters. The language laboratory viewed purely as a teaching device would probably be somewhat demoted in such an arrangement, but it would, at least, be perceived in a proper perspective as a teaching aid. Incorporated properly into a teaching programme, it stands to enhance the somewhat tarnished reputation it now enjoys. A move towards more individual work assignments would also acknowledge the need of the advanced student to work alone more freely and more creatively with the machines than has hitherto been the case.

A teaching experiment carried out at Bradford during the early seventies exemplifies some ways in which the ideas presented in this talk can be implemented. Two examples from this experiment will now be described; they have been chosen because they offer distinct, but interlocking, parts of a First Year course in French strongly weighted towards the development of communicating skills. The strategies sought to embody the ethos of the degree course as a whole, and endeavoured to exploit to the full the teaching aids available. The examples presented here inserted into the wider plan at specific points. Whether the interdependency of the elements composing them would provide a starting-off point for the construction of more general models able to be applied to other situations is another matter; there is insufficient evidence to decide. Greater cooperation between institutions might well provide it. However, the examples demonstrate one way in which the machines can play an essential role in course design.

Example I: Guided Conversation.

(a short, intensive period, which formed the first two weeks of the language course).

5 contact hours each week, organised into small group work and individual assignments.
The 'package' formed the introduction to the language course, and had three distinct aims:

i) to develop confidence in understanding and using spoken French;

ii) to emphasise, from the start, the importance of accuracy in the spoken and written forms of the language;

iii) to begin the systematic training of the student to make maximum use of the machines; this involved stressing the need to understand clearly the point of every task he was asked to perform.

The methodology sought to throw into relief the complementary roles of the language laboratory and the audio workroom in 'taught' and individual work, and to explore the limits as well as the potential of each function; it soon become clear that the preparation of efficient self-help materials demanded impressive amounts of time and imagination. It became equally obvious that the tutor had to discover new ways of using his time productively in the laboratory sessions.

The materials themselves were concerned with the student's transition into university life, and comprised three topics around that theme:

i) **L'arrivée à Bradford** (requiring an anecdotal approach);

ii) **Ma ville** (requiring a descriptive approach);

iii) **Premières impressions de la vie à l'université** (requiring a more 'abstract' approach).

The topics were presented in two forms:

i) a small number of key questions were posed, which formed the basis for individual practice and group work; instructions were provided for each exercise and activity;

ii) recorded discussions by two or three native speakers using the same key questions; the recording sessions were unscripted, but some 'pre-editing' ensured that the discussion followed appropriate lines.

These quite lengthy recordings were used simultaneously with work under (i):

a) for strengthening listening comprehension, using work booklets, and for providing 'authentic' samples of ways in which some native speakers dealt with the topics. Implicit in the approach was the conviction that the starting point for comprehension must always be texts which, at this stage of the student's development, will provide the models he needs. In the methodology the greatest care was taken to use all the teaching and learning resources to bridge the gap which undeniably exists between the formal study of the code, on the one hand, and the putting into practice of the features learned, on the other. The language laboratory and audio-workroom were able to play an important part in the transition. Another problem which arose in this context was how to achieve the necessary balance between the repeated 'correct answer' and a 'free' approach. Any open-ended question involves the possibility of an open-ended answer (Ager, 1969); in listening comprehension exercises, should a 'suggested' answer appear on the tape? The solution which emerged in the investigation was that, in the language laboratory, the student must be trained to make use of the facility for calling the tutor, since providing a 'suggested answer' is one way of giving the student opportunities to check the appropriateness and acceptability of the linguistic form and also the informational content of his reply.

b) for examining features of spoken language in certain situations. Stretches of the dialogues were analysed in class, and a 'vocabulary' of speech-markers characterising the performances was compiled - interjections, hesitators, ways of asking questions and interrupting, uses of **alors, donc, eh bien, et puis** etc. The student was encouraged to use this knowledge in his own audio-workroom attempts to improve his own presentation of the topics in various forms. As well as starting off a training in analystical skills, the set of exercises was valuable in that, although he was using referential material in his individual work, the student was constantly thrown back onto his own resources; he could not simply copy the dialogue on the tapes, since the ideas and experiences of the native speakers were different from his own. It was in this kind of work that the importance of Ager's suggestions became most apparent; the need to devise varied kinds of 'free' follow-up language activities became paramount.

c) for orientating the student towards a real concern for accuracy, using transcription exercises of various kinds. A full transcription of each dialogue was available, and immediate self-correction stipulated, with a listing of the errors made. Parallel to this were exercises involving the transcription of the student's own efforts at presenting the topics. He would work at this until he felt satisfied with his recording. The transcription was seen by the tutor and discussed:

(i) as a piece of genuine spoken language
(ii) as a correctly written record of what had been said.

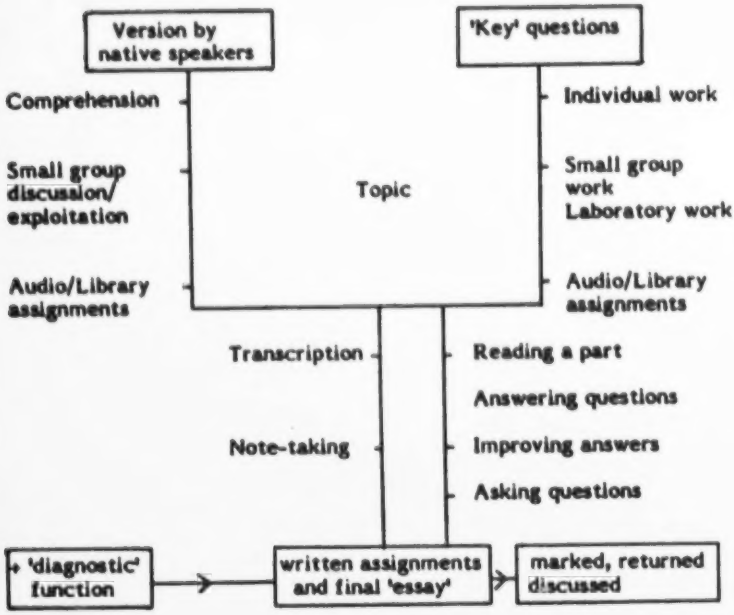
It was expected that, since the activities were identical, a similar attitude would prevail during the transcribing process. There was encouraging evidence that this occurred.

d) for practising reading aloud. Attention was focussed on selected features of intonation, in preparation for a systematic treatment of pronunciation and intonation at a later stage. The exercises involved 'reading a part' from the dialogues, 'shadow reading' for pacing and the repetition of selected utterances from the texts. This work was mostly done in the audio-workroom.

Three interesting conclusions emerged in respect of this 'package': in the first place, precise instructions were needed for each exercise if it was to be used successfully; secondly, individual work in the audio-workroom or group work in the laboratory demanded precise follow-up activities at every stage; thirdly, the balance between 'repeating' and 'open-ended' type exercises was crucial. It was also very clear that the decision to train the student in the use of the facilities was vital; maximum benefit depended largely on his understanding the point of what he was asked to do. In the past this aspect may not have received all the attention it deserved.

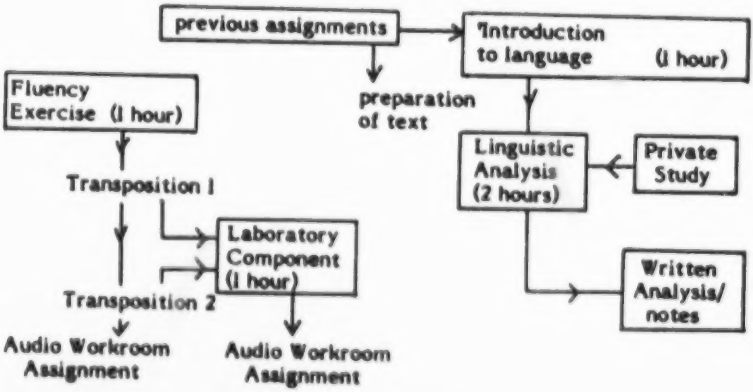
Towards the end of the fortnight, time was given for drawing together the three topics in discussion; the students were then asked to write (not, this time, work orally and transcribe the result) an essay about whether their initial reactions on coming to Bradford had changed. This was marked and returned; some were read out in groups and compared.

The diagram shows the ways in which the activities of the 'package' were fitted together.


Version by native speakers
'Key' questions
Comprehension
Small group discussion/ exploitation
Audio/Library assignments
Topic
Individual work
Small group work
Laboratory work
Audio/Library assignments
Transcription
Note-taking
Reading a part
Answering questions
Improving answers
Asking questions
'diagnostic' function
written assignments and final 'essay'
marked, returned discussed

Example 2: More formal language work

After a further short period devoted to strengthening aural and oral skills using different techniques, linguistic analysis of texts was introduced. This was intended to build on the start made in the elementary analysis of the dialogues during the introductory fortnight, in conjunction with a course in General Linguistics. The texts, spoken and written, were selected from a wide range of registers, and provided sharp contrasts. The diagram illustrates the kind of interaction which was worked out for this stage of the course.



Study booklets were written for each text and its accompanying activities for guiding preparation in the audio-workroom and the library; for each text a recorded reading was made, and students were encouraged to recognise suprasegmental features which affected meaning. At every point an effort was made to produce activities which ensured the continuous development of the selected skills, and which were mutually reinforcing. Again, it was clear that even the traditional types of 'formal' work could be enriched by matching up the different strategies which could contribute to successful learning. This kind of study is essential if the technology is to earn its keep.

It is thus clear that the language laboratory, if given the chance, could make a larger impact than it does at present on teaching at degree level. Research remains the key. With sound projects, vigorously pursued, the technology could earn its keep more significantly. There is evidence that interest has been re-awakened in the language laboratory; it is to be hoped that the rival attractions of C.A.L. and video will not direct attention from it.

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